

internal ribs rightly constructed, which really did the work.

Mr. Tite said the suggestive character of the paper read gave it, in his eyes, great value. We were able now to copy details correctly, but we did not realize the principles which produced them; this literal copying, indeed, was the sin of the day. If the principles of frame-work, wall-work, and spire-growth, had been kept in mind, some great mistakes in modern buildings would have been avoided. We should remember that Gothic buildings grew out of the wants of their time, and bore in all respects its impress. He did not consider it was always the best suited for modern requirements: at all events, it should be adapted to new circumstances by thought and study.

At the close of the evening a letter was read from Mr. Mocatta, asking advice as to the means of ridding a house of a great and increasing nuisance, the domestic ant. The annoyance is one of great magnitude in London, and applications are constantly being made to us to learn the best mode of getting rid of them.—The Dean of Westminster thought poison the only remedy.—Several members said they had failed in all endeavours to eradicate them.—Cajeput oil and jalap have both been mentioned in our pages before now as being destructive to them.

The evening passed pleasantly and harmoniously, and we will not run the risk of making the tone of our notices otherwise, by discussing now the report of the council, which is about to come before the members.

ON THE PRESENT STATE AND PROSPECTS OF ARCHITECTURE.

MANY minds are now directed to the discovery of the defects in present architectural practice, and to their various remedies; but what is most encouraging, tongues and pens are growing bold on the subject. The ice is broken, and many, too timid before, will now bend their energies to the exposure of the various errors into which the art has been betrayed. The important truth has at length been distinctly spoken, that we must have architecture of our own, suited to our climate and habits,—to our social and political position: and, as a natural consequence, the cultivation of the æsthetic faculty will again be considered essential to the architect, and obtain that attention in future to which it is entitled.

And certainly, it is high time that the art should resume its place among the means of intellectual manifestation,—put itself into harmony with the constitution of things, and pass into the regions of truth. It is high time that its professors should regain their mental independence, and take possession of their own place and time. Too long have we been displaying architecture out of unison with the spirit of the age, that finds no echo in the breasts of the present generation. Selections and combinations from ancient buildings, without reference to absolute grace or originality, with frequent sacrifice of what is required by the exigencies of our habits and climate, and the preservation of obsolete features and ornaments, which have no meaning that can now be read or understood, and in which, consequently, none can find pleasure, have been leading characteristics of the architecture of the present century. The architect has now been told that an acquaintance with the principles of abstract beauty, as well as a knowledge of the characteristics and chronology of styles, belongs to the true votary of the art; a cultivation of the imaginative and creative faculties, as well as those of delineation and construction;—that his works, to be valuable, must be invested with a character of their own, not with one of a past day;—that English buildings, in whatever style, should be a free outpouring of native feeling, and exhibit the natural bent of the author's own mind, which should be learned in the principles of natural

design, and imbued with all the beauty of the foregoing.

But the evils of the day cannot be traced exclusively to that devotion to the conventionality of a particular age to which I have alluded; as many late erections do not display even that freedom of thought that would consist, with the most slavish adherence in design, to the style or manner of any period or place. Many churches, for instance, lately erected in various parts, seem a collocation of parts or masses of ancient edifices, brought together merely to afford an example of a certain date, and illustrate a step in the past progress of the art, without any respect to present or local circumstances. Now, it is possible for an architect, even restricted as before mentioned, that is to say, confined to a given style, to produce a whole that would strike the beholder as an original production, and totally different to any extant work.

England has had her independent school of architecture, and it will not be unprofitable to look back for a moment, and to search into the manner and practice of those who last upheld it. We have had men who, in their respective days, supported almost singly the reputation of England for this branch of art. They produced works which their country calls its own, and some light is afforded us by their example. Inigo Jones, Wren, and Vanbrugh, we do not find fettering their genius to the style or manner of some single edifice in Italy or elsewhere; they took the elements of the classic styles, increased in richness by the Italians, and only imitated the latter in the broad principles upon which they worked in using them; preserving the freedom of their own minds, listening to the dictates of nature, and exercising reason, sentiment, taste, and judgment in the execution of whatever task they were appointed.

These masters were not equal in taste. Wren and Vanbrugh were sometimes led into violations of natural propriety and the breach of laws which are of eternal obligation; but Inigo Jones, though beautiful and picturesque, can scarcely be charged with licentiousness, and when he visited Italy it was to imbue his mind with classic beauty and study Italian principle only. Wren had the difficult task, in reference to his churches, of providing for a new form of worship; and in many of them he has been eminently successful. His mode of adapting the classic or Italian detail to those Gothic forms and features which could not be dispensed with, evince his originality and independence of mind. The application of Italian detail to Gothic principles of composition had been made before his time by the Elizabethan builder; but his manner of doing it, in reference to the towers and spires of his churches, show the master unfettered by precedent and example; and from the union of the two styles in this important feature of the English church has resulted some of the most beautiful objects that adorn the metropolis and other towns of the kingdom. Many of them are more or less deficient in the higher qualities of design and composition (concentration for instance), and exhibit too much of the monotony in form and character of the Chinese pagoda or Turkish minaret, but there are others which display the purest taste, though the best are but faint indications of that fairy magnificence that might be produced by the architect in whom is combined freedom of mind and fertility of imagination with purity of taste and solidity of judgment, if the style were taken up and pursued in the present day.

Of the striking beauty of which this union of principles is capable, I could instance as examples two or three of Wren's steeples as deserving of distinct notice, would time and space permit; but one by Dean Aldrich, at All Saints Church, Oxford, is worthy of more particular attention, as possessing qualities which are generally wanting in works of the kind, and might serve as a good subject of study. Its parts are all admirably adjusted, and the architect that examines this steeple must be led to confess that the designer has hit the true proportion that should exist between the tower and spire—a most important point in these structures, the difference of the classic proportion from that of the Gothic, in reference to this matter, being the chief thing to be observed. The great fault of the classic campanile, generally, is the disproportion of

those parts, the spires being too large in most instances (a fault of St. Martin-in-the-Fields), the latter should be considerably smaller at the base when springing from a classic tower than when surmounting the Gothic, for reasons which could readily be shown.

We are not altogether in the dark with these examples before us; Inigo Jones has left works which have been renowned through Europe; and Wren, in many of his churches, has been eminently successful in evoking the spirit of the beautiful. He has produced works which properly belong to and characterize the age and country in which they were built; we behold him adopting the best elements with which he was acquainted, and for which his genius was fitted, to respond to the call of his time. He took the best materials that time had bequeathed him, and worked truly with them, according to the lessons of nature and enlightened taste, duly influenced, but not fettered, by precedent: not that his taste was always pure: my encomium is directed to the mode in which he wrought, the independent manner in which he worked up his materials, and the boldness which characterized his career, rather than to the uniform grace or merit of his productions. Vanbrugh worked in the same spirit, exercised the same broad principles, with similar success, in another department of the art.

But other monitors might be summoned to yield their admonitions on this subject; there are many old buildings in London and other ancient cities, in various styles, or in no style, and by architects unknown, that could, if we would heed them, yield very useful lessons as regards some important qualities of art. The buildings I allude to have very little pretension to architectural character, yet they evince truth, sincerity, and independence of mind, and mirror to us something of the true method of art.

A glance at the great architects of Italy will not be less profitable than the review we have just made of our own. To their manner and practice a great deal more of attention is probably due, than has ever been paid. At the period of the revival, we find them exerting every faculty of mind; combining genius with energy and practical skill, to rescue the art from the thralldom of ignorance and barbarism into which it had sunk; and at a later period their characteristic independence did not forsake them. We find Palladio, Vignola, and others exercising the same energy and original and creative power that had characterized their predecessors. From all we know of Palladio, he made the ancients the vehicles merely for the expression of his own thoughts and feelings, and moulded all that Greece and Rome had left him to his own purposes. Through all obstacles we find him struggling to the illustration of his own ideas, unburthening himself of the great image,—“the nymph of his soul.” How far he consulted the exact wants of his own times, is not for me to say; but his independent habit of mind, which manifests itself everywhere in his works,—his manner of using the antique elements as mere words for the utterance of ideas, is certainly worthy of notice, and must be full of interest for the lovers of true art. His works stand out even at the present day, from all others, by the beautiful harmony of their parts and proportions, and evince, both in their construction and decoration, the most original and stirring genius of design. It was his conviction that the architecture of the ancients was of universal application, and might be completely adapted to the various circumstances of different ages and nations; that such adaptation they themselves have authorized and suggested, in the modifications which may be discovered in their works. But let us look into the ancient art itself. What was the architecture of the Greeks? “A second nature,” says an eminent writer, “made to work for social objects,—such was the architecture of the ancients;” and true art is the same to-day—a union of man's feeling and imagination with the requirements of necessity and dictates of nature, with respect to climate, soil, popular condition, and other circumstances. True art yields not up the reins to precedent. Man is the creator of the arts, and their great maxims and principles are written on his own breast. The Creator of the Universe may be said to have left off his work at the point